

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A combination of piston and piston ring, comprising:
a piston having a piston ring groove in which at least the piston ring groove is made of steel, said piston reciprocally moving in a cylinder bore;
a piston ring made of ~~east iron~~~~flake graphite~~ cast iron, spheroidal graphite cast iron, white cast iron, malleable cast iron, vermicular graphite cast iron or alloy cast iron ~~having an elastic modulus ranging from 130000 to 170000 MPa~~, and fitted into the piston ring groove; and
a hard coat film formed to at least an outer peripheral sliding surface of the piston ring.
- 2 – 3. Cancelled (without prejudice or disclaimer).
4. (Original) A combination of piston and piston ring according to claim 1, wherein said hard coat film is an ion-plating film.
5. (Original) A combination of piston and piston ring according to claim 1, wherein said piston ring is subjected to a nitriding treatment.
6. (New) A combination of piston and piston ring according to claim 1 wherein said combination of piston and piston ring is a combination of piston and piston ring for an internal combustion engine.

7. (New) A combination of piston and piston ring according to claim 6 wherein said internal combustion engine is a diesel engine.

8. (New) A combination of piston and piston ring according to claim 4 wherein said combination of piston and piston ring is a combination of piston and piston ring for an internal combustion engine.

9. (New) A combination of piston and piston ring according to claim 8 wherein said internal combustion engine is a diesel engine.

10. (New) A combination of piston and piston ring according to claim 5 wherein said combination of piston and piston ring is a combination of piston and piston ring for an internal combustion engine.

11. (New) A combination of piston and piston ring according to claim 10 wherein said internal combustion engine is a diesel engine.

12. (New) A piston and piston ring assembly adapted for reciprocating movement in a cylinder of an internal combustion engine, said assembly comprising:
a cylindrical piston having a circumferential piston ring groove made of steel;
a cast iron piston ring fitted within said groove; and
a hard coat film formed on at least a radially outer peripheral surface of the cast iron piston ring for reciprocating sliding surface engagement with said cylinder.

13. (New) A method for reducing the tendency of a piston ring to adhere to a steel piston ring groove in a reciprocating piston of an internal combustion engine, said method comprising:

applying a hard coat film to at least an outer peripheral sliding surface of a cast iron piston ring; and
fitting said surface-coated cast iron piston ring into said steel piston ring groove.